

*Games of Violence***PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BILLS**

[English]

CUSTOMS TARIFF**AMENDMENT TO PREVENT IMPORTATION OF GAMES
SIMULATING CRIME AND VIOLENCE**

Mr. Stan Schellenberger (Wetaskiwin) moved that Bill C-232, to amend the Customs Tariff (games of violence) be read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs.

He said: Mr. Speaker, Bill C-232 proposes to ban the importation of coin operated or electronic games which simulate acts of crime or violence on the part of the player. The bill will achieve this purpose through an amendment to the Customs Tariff Act which would add an additional item to the prohibited list of items under Schedule C of the Customs Tariff.

These games of violence were first brought to my attention by an article in *Safety Canada*, a monthly publication of the Canada Safety Council. The March, 1977, issue advised of the imminent importation into Canada of "Death Race", a coin-in-the-slot electronic game destined for arcades and fairgrounds, the object of which is to drive a simulated vehicle in such a way as to "kill" as many pedestrians as possible in a 60-second period.

The pedestrians, depicted by small blips on a screen, weave about, and when one is hit a loud scream is heard. A player scoring 1-3 points is designated as a skeleton chaser. If he scores between four and ten points he is a bone cracker, and a score of between 11 and 20 points makes him a gremlin hunter. A score of 21 points or more makes the player an "expert driver".

To my mind, such games have absolutely no redeeming value, and their entry into Canada should be barred. We are living in an era when the younger generation is subject to all sorts of perverse influences: violence on television, and child pornography in books and magazines. Presently the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs is looking into this very matter. To allow yet another corrupting factor seems foolish at best.

● (1702)

At the age of 16 or so, when a young person finally gets his driver's licence and sits behind the steering wheel of a car, he should be doing so with a keen sense of responsibility. However, if part of his practice driving time has been spent at the wheels or controls of a machine such as "death race" and knocking down as many pedestrians as possible, what sort of responsible attitude can be expected?

Safety authorities and psychologists in both Canada and the United States are very concerned about this game. Clearly they are worried about the psychological impact that such macabre games will have on impressionable minds. A psychologist with the American National Safety Council, in expressing his concern about this game, stated; "Nearly 9,000

[Mr. Speaker.]

pedestrians were killed on our roads last year". That is no joke. We can get a comparable figure for the number of pedestrians killed in Canada last year. I am sure all but a very small percentage of the people playing this game would not jump in their cars and take off after pedestrians on the street; but perhaps one in a thousand or one in a million would. How can we do anything but share this person's concern? The carnage on our roads already is staggering. How do we know that such games as "Death Race" will not impress some unbalanced individuals, if they can be called that, to try their so-called skills on an actual highway?

In my attempts to stir the government to take action, under Standing Order 43 I proposed a motion on March 24, 1977. I urged the then minister of industry, trade and commerce to take steps to prevent the importation of the game at that time. In a motion to follow this up, I wrote a letter to the minister asking him to outline the steps available to him and the country to prohibit entry of the game. The minister's reply was most disheartening. He informed me that the only course available to ban the game at that time was if he could use the Export and Import Permits Act. However, the act allows for only the prohibition of such articles entering our country as those which are subject to government controls in the country of export. Because there is no ban or prohibition on the use of "Death Race" in the United States, under the present act the minister was powerless.

It seems quite incomprehensible that Canada's decision about banning a certain article should be dependent upon a foreign government's treatment of the same article. Upon learning of the restrictions in connection with the Export and Import Permits Act, the Canada Safety Council similarly was disturbed. Mr. Rick Green, the editor of *Safety Canada*, stated the following:

It seems almost unbelievable that, to get this item removed from the arcades and fairgrounds in Canada to avoid the risk of influencing that marginal personality who just might be influenced, we must first hope a foreign—if friendly—government takes some action.

My luck was not better with the then minister of finance who suggested that action to ban the game was possible under section (c) of the Customs Tariff Act. Amendments of this kind could be proposed by the government only at the time of a budget. This meant that a year or more could pass before the government could make such amendments to the act in order to stop this game from entering Canada. Other federal departments were just as unhelpful. The Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs indicated that it could not act because the machine was not being offered for sale to a private individual. The Customs and Excise Branch of the Department of National Revenue indicated that it could stop entry of the game only if it was directed to do so by another department. Discouraged by this game of musical chairs with various government departments, finally I decided to pursue the matter on my own in the form of a private members bill.

Since I first raised the issue in the House of Commons, almost an entire year has elapsed, and already the game has entered Canada, along with games similar to it. The game is reported to be in operation in most major Canadian cities. I